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## Hallowed Stewards: Solon and the Sacred Treasurers of Ancient Athens

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## REFERENCES

William S. BUBELIS, *Hallowed Stewards: Solon and the Sacred Treasurers of Ancient Athens*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2016. 1 vol. 15,7 × 23,4 cm, xv+272 p. ISBN : 978-0-472-11942-4.

- 1 This rich and well-documented book ranges beyond the limited bounds set by its title: *Hallowed Stewards: Solon and the Sacred Treasurers of Ancient Athens* is not restricted to the officials in charge of religious funds as it also deals with the larger theme of sacred finances and property. It is also not confined to the Solonic, or even the later Archaic period, but includes the entire Classical age, from which most documentary evidence exists. Indeed, any treatment of the constitutional history of Archaic Athens must directly or indirectly deal with the Classical period as well. So, if the title is a bit misleading when taken at face value, the A. must be applauded precisely because of the diachronic scope of his work, which provides the first in-depth and contextual treatment of a group of magistrates who performed a crucial, but hitherto under-theorized, role in the institutional history of archaic and classical Athens.
- 2 Bubelis' book seeks to explain the development of the sacred officials, commonly referred to as *tamiai* or *hieropoioi* in the Athenian sources, from the time of Solon's reforms (594/3 BC). B.'s definition of these officials is pragmatic, excluding non-religious financial officials, as well as non-financial religious personnel, hence his straightforward translation of the term as "sacred treasurers". From the outset, Bubelis sets his views apart from those — Jacoby most notably among them — who view the fast promulgation of magistracies handling religious funds between the sixth and fourth centuries BC as a conflict between the "state" and the *genê*, understood to have been firmly embedded in the "elite". B. rightly argues that the latter proposition is untenable and moves on to

discredit the sacred vs. secular opposition in the development of sacred institutions, especially with regard to the role played by the *polis*, which too often is painted as a “secular” check on the religious authority of the *genê*. For if such an opposition existed, B. argues, why did not Kleisthenes seize the opportunity to check the religious class, rather than allowing “*genê*, *phratryai*, and priests to conduct their affairs and hold their privileges as before?”

- 3 This touches upon the important question why there were so many sacred treasurers when there was an ample class of priests and other cult personnel among the *gennetai* to take care of the financial needs of the *polis*’ cultic institutions. In providing an answer to this question, B. rejects Jameson’s suggestion that the growth of the state’s financial stake in the cults happened largely in cooperation with the *genê* as the sacrificial needs of the *polis* become more demanding and thus complex. Rather, B. shows that priests and magistrates were conceived as two different kinds of authority, religious and financial, with the *genê* responsible for the former and the *polis* for the latter domain. Conceding that the former could and did dispose of its own sacred funds, the major *polis* cults could never be funded as lavishly without taxation enforced by the state. It was precisely this kind of taxation that remained firmly in control of the *polis*, through the sacred treasurers whom it appointed. This was not an accommodation arrived at through strife, but rather piecemeal, in as much as “a given cult’s management appeared in need of reform.”
- 4 Chapter 1 discusses the Solonian origins of the sacred treasurers in his Law on the *Tamiai*, arguing that the exclusive right to serve as *tamias* was awarded to the *pentakosiomedimnoi* in order to secure their support for what essentially constituted the appropriation by the *polis* of Eupatrid prerogatives. B. even goes so far as to suggest that Solon created the *pentakosiomedimnoi* as an independent class specifically for the purpose of the selection of the sacred treasurers, a position attractively supported by the fact that the office holders had to be able to deposit an indemnity, to be returned upon full accounting at the end of their tenure. Chapter 2 deals with the “Solonian Calendar”—for which no direct evidence exists and which presumably originated in “a scatter of separate laws”—and other measures, enacted by the lawgiver, that impacted an emergent *polis* bureaucracy. B. argues that the creation of the treasurers must be seen in tandem with the specification of other offices, such as the archons. Chapter 3 focuses on the politics behind the office of sacred treasurer. In particular it is shown that the institutional mechanism of the Archaic Athenian *polis* was geared toward achieving electoral patronage, a mechanism that was dampened but not fundamentally changed under the Peisistratids. Chapter 4 is a functional analysis of the specific duties of Athena’s *tamiai*, especially the erection of statues, the handling of the sacred objects and the buildings in which they were stored, explaining how the office became an essential tool in regulating elite competitive interests. Chapter 5 discusses the sacred funds and the various problems of conceptualization that have haunted the subject. Bubelis argues rightly that *hosia* money should be seen as distinct from *hiera* or *demosia* money, a subject recently treated more in depth by Josine Blok.<sup>1</sup> Taking his cue from her definition in a previous article that *hosios* money was publicly owned money set aside for religious purposes,<sup>2</sup> he suggests in chapter 6 that *demosia* funds could be made *hosia* if and when the need to do so arose. In a similar vein Bubelis argues in chapter 7 that *hiera* lands were essentially the property of the gods, while *hosia* lands were owned by the *polis* (pace Papazarkadas), thus following the general distinction between *hosios* and *hierai*, although he may be pushing the

evidence (IG II<sup>2</sup> 204 in particular) a bit too far when he asserts that *hiera* land must remain uncultivated at all times. This theme is continued in chapter 7. B. distinguishes between *hiera* lands, left uncultivated, and *hosia* lands, rented out to generate *hosia* income which could fund religious observances. But there is no evidence for *hosia* property in connection with Athena Polias and some other major deities; B. suggests that their cult was funded by a regular allocation of *hosia* funds each prytany, as an instance of what in the fourth century became the *merismos* of revenue to spending authorities. The book ends with a short concluding chapter summarizing the main arguments. It contains an appendix on the altar of Khairion (with which the book also opens), his epitaph at Eretria (IG I<sup>3</sup> 1516) and the dedication of Alkimakhos (IG I<sup>3</sup> 618).

- 5 In conclusion, while Bubelis' reconstruction of the Archaic office of sacred treasurer (of Athena in particular) is meticulously documented and tightly argued, there will unavoidably remain detractors who take a more skeptical view of the reach of our sources as pertaining to the Solonic period. This may be a problem that is inherently unsolvable and will remain a bone of contention between optimists and pessimists. Even so, the book is the product of fine scholarship and represents an important addition to the ongoing discussion about sacred property.

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## NOTES

1. J. BLOK, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 63–79.
  2. J. BLOK, “Deme accounts and the meaning of *hosios* money”, *Mnemosyne* 63 (2010), p. 61–93.
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